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The Rev. Mr: *HOLME*'s
S E R M O N
P R E A C H ' D before the
G O V E R N O R S
O F T H E
C O U N T Y - I N F I R M A R Y
I N
N O R T H A M P T O N,
O C T O B E R 24, 1745.

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The D U T Y of A L M S G I V I N G
Stated and Recommended.

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D in the

Parish Church of *All-Saints* in *Northampton*,

B E F O R E T H E

G O V E R N O R S

O F T H E

County I N F I R M A R Y

For S I C K and L A M E Poor,

A T

The A N N I V E R S A R Y M E E T I N G

O N

THURSDAY, O C T O B E R 24, 1745.

By *T H O M A S H O L M E*,
Rector of *Wilden*, and Chaplain to the Right Hon.
William, Earl of *Hume*.

To which is added,

An A P P E N D I X concerning the Admission of Patients,
Esq. Esq. with a List of the Subscribers and Benefactors.

N O R T H A M P T O N :

Printed and sold by *WILLIAM DICEY*; also sold by
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At the Anniverfary Meeting of the Governors
and Subscribers to the County Infirmary in
Northampton, on Thursday, Oct. 24, 1745,

A G R E E D, *That the Thanks of the Society be
given to the Rev. Mr. Holme, for his Ser-
mon preach'd that Day before them; and that He be
desired to grant his Permission to have it printed
immediately.*

Thomas Drury, *Chairman.*

Published by Order of the
Governors, to be fold
for the Benefit of the
Charity.

H. Woolley, *Sec.*

T O

The Most Noble

JOHN Duke of MONTAGU,

Grand Visitor,

The Right Honourable

JAMES Earl of NORTHAMPTON,

Perpetual President,

The Right Reverend

The Lord Bishop of *Peterborough,*

A N D

The rest of the GOVERNORS
of the COUNTY INFIRMARY
at *Northampton,*

This Sermon is most humbly de-
dicated

B Y

Their most Obedient Servant,

Wellingbo-
rough, Oct.
25, 1745.

THOMAS HOLME.

L U K E, xvi. 9.

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness ; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.

TH E S E Words are the Application of the remarkable Parable of the unjust Steward ; who was accused to his Master for profusely wasting an Estate, which had been entrusted to his Care and Management to improve, and was therefore called upon to give up his Accounts, in Order to his being discharged from his Stewardship. Hereupon, he immediately considers with himself, what Course he had best take to provide a Subsistence, after he was turn'd out of his Office. To work he had not been used ; and *to beg* he was ashamed ; and therefore he very wisely resolves, to make himself Friends aforehand among his Lord's Debtors, by taking a favourable Account of them, and remitting a considerable Part of what was due,

due, that so they might be induced to be kind to him in his Necessity. This Contrivance of the Steward coming to his Master's Knowledge, he commends him for his Policy and Prudence, in providing so well for his own future Maintenance.

And here I cannot but observe, that there is no Necessity for supposing (as Interpreters generally do upon this Place) that this Act of the Steward, in under-rating the Accounts of his Lord's Debtors, and remitting a Part, was an Act of Injustice, with Intention to defraud : * For it is only on the Account of his former Behaviour, that he
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* *Charity*, which properly signifies *Universal Love* and *Good Will*, has by frequent Use been confined to the *particular* Sense of *Charity to the Poor*. And great indeed are the Promises which are made in Scripture to this *single Branch* of Charity, *in particular* : It is stiled by our Saviour, St. Luke xvi. 9. *A making to ourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations*. Upon which Application of the Parable of the unjust Steward, I cannot but observe by the Way, that his remitting to his Lord's Debtors a Part of their Debts, ought *not* to be understood (as it usually is) to have been a *defrauding* of his Lord ; for it is only upon his *former* Behaviour, that the Text charges him with Injustice : But in this *last* Action, He seems to be represented as obliging his Lord's Debtors out of what *He Himself* was still to account for : For which Reason, our Saviour compares *his* Security to himself by a *timely* Bounty the Friendship of those Debtors, (He compares it) to *Our* laying up for ourselves, by Works of Charity and Beneficence here on *Earth*, a Treasure hereafter in the *Heavens*.

Dr. Clark's *Sermons*, (8vo). Vol. III. p. 285.

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is charged with Injustice, in this Particular his Lord expressly commends him, *because he had done wisely*,----not acted out of a Principle of knavish Cunning, but like a wise and prudent Man, who was willing to favour his Lord's Debtors, out of a Part, of what himself was obliged afterwards to account for to the full. And this Representation of the Passage sufficiently answers the Parallel intended by our Saviour; for he compares this Man's securing to himself the future Friendship of those Debtors, by a well-concerted and timely Bounty, to our laying up for our selves a Treasure hereafter in the Heavens, by the Performance of Acts of Charity and Beneficence here upon Earth; and accordingly exhorts all his Followers, to imitate the like wise and prudent Conduct, with Regard to their everlasting Concerns, in the Words of the Text. *And I say unto you, make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.*

There is nothing very difficult in the Words, only it may be proper to take Notice, that by the *Mammon of Unrighteousness*, we can hardly understand Riches unjustly got, or that it was our Saviour's Intention to command his Disciples to give such Wealth away in Charity; because in

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that Case, undoubtedly Restitution is the proper Duty of a Christian. But the *Mammon of Unrighteousness*, I rather think, is what the Scripture in other Places calls *deceitful Riches*, † Riches that generally turn to no certain good Account, but are expended in such a Manner as deceives and frustrates our Expectation ;---Riches that are Superfluous to the Necessities of our present Condition, and which if not laid out in Acts of useful Charity, are usually disposed of to no good Purpose, but squandered away in Vanity, or Luxury ; and are so far from contributing, or being made Friends, either to our present or future Happiness, that they often prove the Bane and Ruin of both.

These uncertain Riches we are commanded so to dispose of in this Life, that *when we fail, i. e.* when all these transitory Comforts forsake us, when this World and all the Glories of it fade and vanish, when either it leaves us, or we leave it ; then *they may receive us into everlasting Habitations* ; which last Words, *They may receive us*, may either signify, those Friends we have made to our selves by a religious and charitable

† Μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας cannot signify Unrighteous, or Ill-gotten, but false and transitory Wealth ; as is evident from Verse 11. where Μαμωνᾶ ἀδικον is opposed, not to δίκαιον, but to ἀληθινόν.

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table Disposal of our worldly Wealth, viz. the Poor, and on their Account our Saviour Christ, who has promised, that whatever we do in this *Way to the Least of these his Brethren* (for so he condescends to stile the Poor) he will accept of, and reward, as done to himself: These *Friends* will receive us into the Kingdom of Heaven. Or else the *Greek Words* here translated, *They may receive you* || may be rendered impersonally, *ye may be received*; and then the Sense of the Text will be---I advise you to make such Provision for your future Happiness, by so disposing of the perishing Riches entrusted to your Management in this World, in Acts of useful Charity; that when all these earthly Comforts fail, on the Account of these your good Deeds, ye may be received into everlasting Habitations, in the World to come.

In the Text thus explained, we have
First, A Duty enjoin'd by our Saviour in these Words, *Make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*. And,

Secondly, A very strong Motive and Encouragement to put this Duty in Practice; *That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations*.

My Business therefore at this Time shall be

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I. To

|| Vide *Hammond* in Loc.

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I. To consider the Nature, Measure, and Extent of the Duty commanded in the Text.

II. To urge the general Practice of it, by such Arguments and Motives as are proper. And,

III. To apply it to the particular Occasion of our present Meeting.

I. I am to consider the Nature, Measure, and Extent of the Duty commanded in the Text.

Now the Duty we are here commanded to put in Practice, (as is evident from what has already been hinted in opening the Text) is that of Alms-giving, or Liberality to the Poor. The being free and ready to part with our Wealth, according to the Proportion GOD has blessed us with, on every just Occasion of real and useful Charity: Whether that Charity be of a publick or a private Nature, whether it extends only to particular Objects, or is calculated for the general Good, for the making a standing Provision for the Poor, or indeed of any other Way contributing to supply the Necessities, and to promote or increase the Well-being of Mankind. Bounty to the Poor is what in common Language we call Charity, tho' the Scripture Signification of that Word is very different, as is evident from St. Paul, who supposes that we may give *all our Goods to feed the Poor, and yet want Charity;*

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Charity ; § so that Charity in the Scripture Sense of the Word, is the same as Universal Love and Benevolence, and where that divine Virtue is the Root and Principle, this of Alms-giving is one of its fairest Branches, one of its best and goodliest Effects; and hence it has not undeservedly engrossed the very Name of Charity itself.

The Measure and Extent of this great Duty of our Religion, may in a good Degree be collected from the noble and generous Principle from whence it flows, which is universal: Various as are the several Wants and Miseries of Mankind, and extensive as our own Abilities and Opportunities of relieving them. *Give*, says our Saviour, *to every Man that asketh of thee*; ¶ and agreeable to this Precept was his own Example; for *he went about doing good*; the constant Employment of his Life, was to heal the Sick, and cure the Diseased, to give Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé, to make Deaf hear, and the Dumb to speak, and in the Expression of all other Acts of Love and Compassion to a miserable and helpless World: And the best Direction we can follow is to obey his Command, and as we have him for an Example, *to go and do Likewise* ‡. But who is sufficient for these Things?

§ 1. Cor. xiii. 3. ¶ Luke vi. 30. ‡ Luke x. 37.

Things? What Man is able to give Relief to every one that asks for it? Who can cure all the Sick, feed all the Hungry, and cloath all the Naked, and administer Comfort to every other Distress that happens within the Compass of his Notice and Observation? There is a Necessity then of interpreting our Saviour's Precept, not according to the strict Letter, but with an equitable Limitation; and the Practice of this Duty must in all Reason be restrained to proper Objects, and be limited by our own Abilities. For some may ask Relief through Covetousness, when they do not want it, and sure it can be no Charity to give to such: Others, tho' they may be needy enough, yet by no Means deserve to be relieved; such I mean, are those that are very well able to maintain themselves in some lawful Employment, but chuse to beg, either because that is the easiest Way of getting a Livelihood, or else they find by Experience, they can procure themselves better Subsistence by begging, than they could earn by honest Industry: And such, I doubt for the most Part, are the common wandring Beggars; whom to relieve, may indeed be an Instance of Compassion and Good-nature, but sure it is a very mistaken one of Charity. The proper Charity to such Beggars, is to put the Laws in Execution, and to oblige them by
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due Correction to labour for their Living, and from the Pests and Nufances of Society, to become useful Members of the Commonwealth. But to give Alms to these *disorderly Walkers, who work not at all*, * is to maintain them in Idleness, and thereby to encourage them in their infamous Course of Life ; and is so far from being a Duty of Christian Charity, that it is expressly forbidden both by the Laws of our Country, and the Laws of our Religion : And St. Paul's Direction, concerning such idle and dissolute Persons, is very just, *That if any Man would not work, neither should he eat* †.

The only Way then of turning our Alms into the right Channel, is wholly to withdraw them from these lazy Vagrants, and to apply them to the Relief of the helpless Poor. Such, as either, by Reason of their Infancy, are incapable of earning a Subsistence ; or such grown Persons, whom Age, or Loss of Limbs, or Sicknefs have disabled. These are the true and proper Objects of our Charity, and most deserving of our compassionate Regard ; and to see such ready to perish for Want of Relief, is a Reproach to our Nation, and a Scandal to our Religion : These poor Creatures whether they speak to us or no, may be truly said

* 2 *Theff.* iii. 11.† 2 *Theff.* iii. 10.

said *to ask*, and that too in the most moving and importunate Manner; their miserable and helpless Condition cries aloud in their Behalf, tho' themselves perhaps may be silent. It is then the Misery and Necessity of Mankind, that entitle them to our Beneficence; and therefore our Charity ought to be free as the Light, not confined to a few particular Favourites, or within the narrow Limits of our own Parties, and Perswasions, of our own Kindred and Acquaintance, no nor yet to those of our own Nation and Country, but must be extended to all in general, who bear the same Species with our selves; and every one, who is in great Want of Relief, and unable to procure it for himself, has an unquestionable Right to a Part of our Substance, provided we are sensible that our Alms will do him a real Good, and our selves no great Prejudice.

But tho' this Principle of Charity be so extensive, yet it cannot be supposed, that the Practice can ever be equal to it; and it is impossible, let a Man's Circumstances be what they will, to relieve every proper Object that comes in his Way; and therefore it must be left to every one's Choice, to make such a Preference, as his own Prudence and Discretion shall direct him, agreeable to the Apostle's Rule, who commands

[II]

us to do good to all Men, but more especially to those that are of the Household of Faith *.

Consider we now the Persons upon whom the Duty in the Text is incumbent, or whom it is that our Saviour commands to make to themselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, by giving Alms to the Needy.

Now this is a Duty which must evidently concern every Man who hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother have need; † every Man who does not want common Necessaries, and is not an Object of Charity himself. Men of low or moderate Fortunes are apt to bemoan themselves sadly, that they want Abilities for the Discharge of this Duty; and therefore are for shifting the Maintenance of the Poor, entirely from themselves, upon the Rich; as thinking them more able to bear the whole Charge, than themselves any Part of it. But this is a very great Mistake; for as the Divine Providence has thought fit to make so much Disparity in Mens outward Circumstances; as it hath placed some in a high and affluent, and others in a low and mean Condition; so, according to the Difference of each Man's Station in Life, must his Expences generally be; and Persons of exalted Characters and Fortunes, have plainly more Things to
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* Gal. vi. 10.

† John 1 Epist. iii. 17.

provide for, (which must be considered as Necessaries to them) than those of inferior Rank ; and consequently a Man of moderate Fortune, may have it in his Power, according to his different Rate of Living, and in Proportion to what he possesses, to afford as much in useful Charity, as the Wealthy and Great. I do not mean, that he can actually spare so large an Alms, but that he may with as little Inconvenience to himself, contribute a small Portion out of his little, as the other can a great deal out of his Abundance. In Reason then the Obligation to Almsgiving, is according to a Person's Abilities, and it must be a Duty which equally concerns all Ranks and Conditions of Men, who have any Thing superfluous to the Maintenance of themselves and Families. Nay St. *Paul* expressly tells us, that even those who earn their Bread *by the Sweat of their Faces*, are bound to give somewhat to the Support of the Needy. *Let him that stole; steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* || And therefore the Advice of the antient *Jewish* Writer will in this Case be a good Rule to regulate our Conduct by. *Be merciful after thy Power, if thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy Diligence gladly to*
give

give of that little ; for so gatherest thou thyself a good Reward in the Day of Necessity. §

Indeed as to the precise Proportion, which every Man is bound to give away in Alms, that I cannot take upon me to determine ; but yet this in general may be understood, by applying our Saviour's most excellent and equitable Rule, *of doing as we would be done by*, to the Case before us. For if we would but make the Case of the helpless Poor our own (and G O D only knows how soon it may be the Lot of any of us) by supposing our selves in their miserable Condition : Let us then consider, how it is we would have other Men affected towards us. If we should not like to be overlook'd and slighted by others, then we ought not to deal so by them ; and on the other Hand, that Relief and Compassion which we should desire from others, the same we ought in all Reason to make the Rule and Measure of our Charity to them : And if we would but be willing to do all the good to others, which our selves should take kindly at their Hands, were we in their Circumstances, we should never be much at a Loss to distinguish our proper Duty, in this Particular, on all just Occasions.

In the *Mosaick* Law, was settled the exact Proportion, which the *Jews* were indispen-

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ably obliged to bestow upon the Poor, viz. the thirtieth Part of their yearly Increase ; † and sure that Man must have a strange Opinion of our Religion, and of the superior Obligations we are under to Works of Mercy, who can suppose that the Charity of a *Christian* ought to be less, than what a *Jew* was in strict Justice obliged to.

Yet after all, as the Gospel has no where determined the exact Quantity and Proportion of our Alms, it must be left in a great Measure to every Man's Discretion, to be a *Free-will Offering*, according to the Largeness of his Heart : For that is true Charity, be it little or much, which a Man gives freely, with a willing Mind, and with a tender Compassion of the Wants and Miseries of his Fellow-Creatures. And the more any one retrenches from his Expence, in Pleasure or Diversions, and the greater Share of his Gains or Income he allots for the Purposes of useful Charity, the more *Friends will be made to him self of His Mammon of Unrighteousness*, and the greater shall his Reward be. *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly ; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully : Every one as he purposeth in his Heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of Necessity, for God loveth a chearful Giver.* * *

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† See *Deut.* xvi. 28, 29 ; and xxvi. 12, 13.

* * 2 *Cor.* ix. 6, 7.

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This is the Duty, to a chearful Discharge of which, I am now in the

Second Place to exhort you, by such Arguments and Motives as are proper.

But here, Where shall I begin? Or having begun, where shall I make an End of such a noble, such a copious Subject, on which all the Treasures of Eloquence have been exhausted?

For let us consider it in what Light we please, either with Regard to Reason, or Religion; either with Respect to our selves, or others, in this World, or the next; as the Instances of its Benefits to Mankind are infinite, so likewise are the Encouragements we have to put it in Practice.

Are Justice and Gratitude proper Obligations for Men to act upon? Is the exalted and Godlike Pleasure of doing Good a Motive? Is a good Reputation both living and dying desirable? Are Friends? Are the Blessings of GOD upon our selves, and all that belong to us in this World, and the Joys of Heaven in the next, valuable Things? These then are the Arguments, These the Motives, by which we must enforce the Practice of this divine Virtue.

I. I say, we are obliged to be liberal to the Poor in Point of Justice. The Royal Psalmist hath told us, that *The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof, and that he*
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hath given it to the Children of Men : * But we cannot reasonably suppose, that he has given us the good Things of this World absolutely, to do what we will with ; either to hoard them up, or to squander them profusely, just at our Pleasure : No, they are only committed to our Trust, under certain Restrictions and Limitations, and with a Power to call us to an Account for the Disposal of them ; and the very End of all the Talents and Advantages GOD has bestow'd upon particular Men, is, That they might be capable of doing Good with them ; That is the proper Use they are to be put to ;. This is what they were designed for by their bountiful Author. We are only Stewards then of the manifold Blessings of Providence ; as much as is sufficient to make a suitable Provision for the Necessities and Conveniences of our Selves and Families, according to the Rank and Station we are placed in, is our own ; but the Surplusage we are accountable for ; that was not given us purely for our own Sakes, and for the Gratification of our own private Appetites and Desires, but with a due Regard to the rest of our Lord's Servants, to be distributed among them, as every one had Need.

Those therefore who enjoy much more than the common Conveniences of Life,
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* *Pf.* xxiv. 1. and *Pf.* cxv. 16.

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are under the strongest Obligations to reach out their assisting Hand for the Relief of the miserable and afflicted; and the more they have, the more ample Returns in Charity may justly be expected from them, *for unto whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required.* † And as for those unfaithful Stewards, who either with the Prodigal, have lavished away their Lord's Talent in Luxury and Excess; or with the Miser, have unprofitably laid it up in a Napkin; let them know, that they have been false to a Trust of the highest Nature, that they have unjustly detained, what GOD intended for Bread for the Hungry, and Cloathes for the Naked, and for the Maintenance and Support of those that were ready to perish, and that a Day is coming in which they must render a most severe Account for so doing.

II. We are obliged to this Duty of Almsgiving in Gratitude to GOD and our Blessed Redeemer. Whoever believes a GOD, must acknowledge that his Life, and all the Comforts and Enjoyments of it, are entirely owing to the Bounty of *his* Providence, *who giveth us all Things richly to enjoy;* || and he must also further acknowledge, that some proper Returns of Gratitude must in all Reason be due to that gracious and benevolent

† *Luke* xii. 48.|| *1 Tim.* vi. 17.

volent Being, *who filleth all Things living with Plenteousness* *. Thus far natural Religion will instruct us: But when to this we superadd the Christian Revelation, and consider all those mighty Things, which our blessed Saviour has done and suffered for us, and the Duty of Gratitude to such a Benefactor, returns upon us with redoubled Force, with fresh, and still greater Obligations. Now we cannot any otherwise better express our Gratitude to GOD than, (as he has commanded) by advancing one another's mutual Happiness: For it would be the highest Folly and Presumption, for vain Man, to think of requiting GOD in a proper Sense, in whom all Perfections eternally and essentially dwell; or to imagine, that by any Act of his, he could add to the Glory and Happiness of his Redeemer, whom the Apostle also stiles, *GOD blessed for ever*; § and it is contrary to common Sense to suppose, that meer verbal Praises and Acknowledgments can be a sufficient Return: What are we then to do? How are we to shew our Thankfulness to GOD *for all his Benefits, and for all the Wonders that he has done for the Children of Men.* || Himself hath told us; *The Poor*, says he, *ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them*

* *Psf.* cxlv. 16. § *Rom.* ix. 5. || *Psf.* cvii. 21.

them good *. He has made them his Representatives ; and by a most wonderful Condescension, has conveyed the Right he had to our Kindness over to them ; and has declared, that he will graciously accept the good Offices we do to them, in the same kind Part, as if they were done immediately to himself. *Inasmuch, as ye have done it* (i. e. Works of Mercy and Charity) *to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto Me* †.

III. To relieve the distressed, is not only Matter of strict Duty, and what we are obliged to practice by all the Ties of Justice and Gratitude, but by Ties of a nearer, and more engaging Kind ; such as take hold of our Temper and Inclinations, and which one would think it were impossible for humane Nature not to comply with.

To pity the Misfortunes, and to relent at the Distresses of others, are Passions that as truly belong to the humane Mind, as either Fear, or Love ; and are found in all Men more or less, but especially in those Tempers that are the most generous and humane. These kind Dispositions seem to be implanted in us by the God of Nature, as a merciful Provision in behalf of the miserable, and that we might hence be most

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* *Mark* xiv. 7. † *Matt.* xxv. 40.

powerfully inclined to help and comfort one another in Distress. And besides, we see it has all along been the Design of Providence to make very unequal Distributions in the Affairs of Mankind: It is the happy Lot of some to enjoy an uninterrupted Prosperity, while others are left to struggle all their Days with the Hardships of Poverty and Afflictions, to lie languishing on sick Beds, tortured with all the Pains and Agonies of a perishing Body; Others by unfortunate Accidents are deprived of their Limbs or Senses; and others labour under a perpetual Anguish both of Body and Mind, entirely lost to all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. Now it would be hard to reconcile all these Calamities to the Goodness of that GOD, *whose tender Mercies are over all his Works*, † were it not, that hereby an Opportunity is given to those who are happily free from these Evils, to exercise those God-like Dispositions of Mercy and Compassion, which the great Creator has endowed them with; and in Compliance with their own natural Inclinations to do what they can, to mitigate every Trouble, and alleviate every Misfortune, their Species is liable to.

And sure to do so, cannot fail of administering the most exalted Pleasure to a benevolent Mind; For what Entertainment can
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† *Pſ. cxlv. 9.*

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be so suitable to the Soul of Man, as the pleasing Reflection on its own good Actions, that it has imitated, tho' in a lower Degree, the Divine Perfections, and in some Measure made up the seeming Defects of Providence? The Delights of Sense, as they are short, so are they empty and unsatisfying, they always end in Anxiety and Loathing; and if Criminal, in Terror of Conscience, and Heaviness of Heart: But the Delight which flows from a Remembrance of our good Deeds, is permanent and lasting, and such as neither the Power of Time nor Chance can rob us of. The Reflection which every good Man must have upon the Bowels he has refreshed, and the miserable Objects he has relieved, will be a continual Feast to him; the seasonable Support he has lent to a sinking Friend, and the cheering Peace he has administered to the troubled Spirit, will afford such a perpetual Stock of Comfort to his own Mind, as the most promising Gaities in this World, and all we can desire in it, are not to be compared to; so true is the Observation of *Solomon*, *That the merciful Man doth Good to his own Soul.* ||

Whereas on the contrary, He that is void of Compassion to the Needy and Afflicted, whose Soul does not relent, and his Bowels yern, at the Misery and Distress of others;

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and

|| *Prov.* xi. 17.

and who can find in his Heart to deny them Relief, when it is in the Power of his Hand to give it, must be looked on as an inhumane Wretch degenerated from the Nature of his Kind, into the savage Disposition of the brute *Beasts that perish*.

IV. The Duty enjoined in the Text, is not only a delightful Exercise, and such as gratifies our best and noblest Inclinations, but is also highly conducive both to our temporal Interest and eternal Felicity.

By being beneficent and charitable, we take the likeliest Course to procure our selves a good Reputation both living and dying; which is a Thing so very desirable, and of such singular Advantage on many Accounts, that *Solomon* has told us, *A good Name is rather to be chosen than great Riches*. * And the same wise Author hath also assured us, that *The Memory of the just*, (i. e. the merciful Man) *shall be blessed*; † that his charitable Acts will transmit his Name and Character with Honour to Posterity. And indeed this Tribute, which is so justly due to the Merits and Memories of good Men, seldom fails of being paid with Interest after their Deaths, however their Virtues may have been sullied and obscured by Envy and Detraction in their Life-time.

Again,

* *Prov.* xxii. 1. † *Prov.* x. 7.

Again, For I can but just mention these Things, by disposing of the Mammon of Unrighteousness in Works of useful Charity, the Text supposes we shall make to our selves *Friends*; and how many and great Blessings accrue to Mankind from Friendship, none can be ignorant, who have ever experienced it. For hereby the Blessings of Prosperity are not only secured, but doubled; and should the Scene change, Relief and Support is the least we can expect from our Friends in Adversity: And sure a more natural Way cannot be taken to engage other Men in our Interests, than by doing them Good, and being of kind and merciful Dispositions to all, but especially those that are in Want.

But hereby we not only procure the Favour of Men, but we also make GOD our Friend; we interest Heaven in our Behalf, and entitle our selves to the special Care and Protection of the Divine Providence. *He that sheweth Pity to the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again.* ‡ The good Influences of this Virtue are not confined only to our selves, but will reach even our Relations and Posterity, by deriving a large and extensive Blessing to all that belong to us; and in this Sense I understand

‡ Prov. xix. 17.

stand the Observation of holy *David*, *I have been young, but now am old*, (says he) *yet saw I never the Righteous* (i. e. the charitable Man) *forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread.* * Nay, when Sorrow and Affliction take hold of us, when Pain and Sick-ness and Death approach, when all earthly Comforts fail, and this World, and all the Glories of it fade and vanish, Then *Blessed is the Man that hath provided for the Sick and Needy, for the Lord will deliver him in that Time of Trouble: The Lord shall comfort him when he lieth sick upon his Bed.* † A Time of Pain, and Sickness, and Death, cannot be far from any of us, and when that evil Day once overtakes us, What would not we then give, to be entitled to the Comforts which the merciful and charitable Man will be possess'd of? And who can express the Blessedness of him, who at such a Time, *hath the God of Jacob for his Help, and whose Hope is in the Lord his God.* ‖ The Reflection a good Man will then make upon his past Acts of Charity, will come into his Soul like a refreshing Gleam of Light, and will give him a kind of Foretaste of that infinitely greater Happiness reserved for him in the Heavens.

I do not mean that that any Man by his good Actions can merit Heaven; No, our best

* *Psf.* xxxvii. 25. † *Psf.* xli. 1, 3. ‖ *Psf.* cxlvi. 5.

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best Deeds have too many Imperfections, and we also have too many antecedent Obligations, ever to merit any Thing at the Hands of GOD, and much less so great a Reward as everlasting Happiness: But tho' we disclaim the *Popish* Doctrine of Merit, yet we firmly believe, that good Works are not only conducive, but absolutely necessary to Salvation; and that there is no one particular Virtue, to which the Promise of eternal Life, is so fully, and frequently made in the Sacred Writings, as to this of Mercy and Charity to the Poor. What else can be the Meaning of these Texts? That *the merciful Man shall obtain Mercy.* * --- That *by giving Alms we provide our selves Bags which wax not old.* † --- That hereby we *lay up a Treasure in the Heavens,* || --- and by a charitable Disposal of the *Mammon of Unrighteousness* shall be entitled to an Admission into those *everlasting Habitations.* And in the Account our Saviour himself hath given us of the Day of Judgment, the Proceedings of that Day § seem entirely to turn upon the Good, Men have done, or neglected to do, in this World, to the Sick and Needy, and they are punished, or rewarded accordingly. So that to be merciful
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* *Matt.* v. 7.† *Luke* xii. 33.|| *Luke* xii. 33.§ *Matt.* xxv.

and charitable, and to do good to others, is really and truly to do so to our selves, and to be the best Friends to our own Interest and Happiness, both here and hereafter; beyond which, nothing can be either said or imagined by Way of Motive. And therefore I will now proceed to the

Third and last Thing I proposed, which was to apply what has been said to the the Occasion of our present Meeting. And sure I need not use many Words in the Application, for whatever Arguments I have brought to urge the Practice of Alms-giving in general, come with united Force when applied to this particular Charity, which has every Advantage that can possibly recommend it to the Encouragement of a prudent Man.

The Usefulness of these publick Institutions, and the Benefits accruing from them, have been so largely, so accurately, and judiciously displayed by those who have gone before me in this Office, that the Subject is entirely exhausted;---nothing new either can, or need be said in Favour of them. Experience, and the Number of Infirmarys lately erected, have abundantly shewn the Practicableness of these generous and pious Schemes: The Encouragement and Support they have met with from Persons of all Ranks and Denominations, and especially from those of the
most

most exalted Fortune and Quality, and greatest Abilities, have sufficiently silenced every Objection that could be made against them: And the Thousands of miserable Objects which have been relieved and cured in these Infirmaries, during the short Time they have been established, do loudly proclaim the Benefits they bring to publick Society in general; and in particular, to those most useful Members of it, the *Industrious Poor*.

Such in general is the Excellence of these charitable Foundations, to which I am now to exhort you to a liberal Contribution; and the Occasion must bear me out, while I briefly mention a few of the most obvious and peculiar Advantages which so justly entitle them to the Approbation and Support of the best and wisest Men.

In the Infirmary the best Provision is made for the most real and deserving Objects. Here lazy and clamorous Poverty will find no Relief: The profligate wandering Beggar, with his pretended Lameness and counterfeit Sores, which so often deceive the Inexperience and Good-nature of private Persons, will here meet with no Encouragement: All Fraud and Imposture of this Kind must infallibly be discovered, as soon as enquired into, and none but real Objects can possibly be admitted to a Share in this Charity: And

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as for those that are truly so, the *Sick* and *Lame Poor*, who in their own Habitations, would be in Danger of being neglected and overlooked, and either have no Advice, or such as frequently proves worse than none, will here meet with all the Assistance that the Knowledge and Experience of Physicians and Surgeons, the most eminent in their Profession, can furnish them with: Not to mention that here also those honourable and useful Professors, from the Variety of Cases which must necessarily occur to their Observation, will have a happy Opportunity of improving their Knowledge, and enlarging their Skill and Experience in the yet doubtful Powers of Medicine, in such a Manner, as may be of the greatest future Service to Mankind. * Here the poor Patients

* Some of the most eminent Physicians, particularly *Hypocrates* among the Antients, and *Harvey, Riverius, Sydenham*, and *Baglivi*, among the Moderns, have shewn what most useful Improvements in the Art of Physick may be made by Observation and reasoning upon a Variety of particular Facts and Cases. And the great Advantage of this Method, is well set forth by the ingenious and learned Author of the *State of Physick, Antient and Modern*: Some Passages of which to this Purpose I shall take the Liberty to quote. Speaking of *Hypocrates*, he says: "He certainly put us in the right Way of Proceeding, and if ever Physick be brought to Perfection, it must be by his Method, viz. *Judicious Observation*, and *wise Reasoning*." Clifton's *State of Physick*, &c. p. 17.

And again, speaking of the Insufficiency and Uncertainty of the best *Systems* and *Theories*; he says, p. 132, 133. "That

Patients will not only be accommodated with judiciously prescribed and well prepared Medicines ;

“ That Physick is improvable only by *Observation* ; and
 “ that the Theories of late, have wanted no Ingenuity to
 “ frame ’em, or Authority to support ’em, yet for Want
 “ of a good Foundation in Nature, the very best of them
 “ have many Flaws.——That between *Theory* and *Practice*
 “ there is a wide Difference ; and without attending nicely
 “ to *Symptoms*, especially in *acute Cases*, let a Man’s Learn-
 “ ing be as great as you please, ’tis impossible his Practice
 “ should not be very precarious.——That a Man may
 “ happen to become eminent, but can never understand
 “ Physick without *Observation*, which is certainly all in all.”

And he thus goes on, p. 162. “ Our learned Countryman
 “ *Harvey* might have been of more Service to us, than all
 “ the *Theorists* put together, if we could have prevailed
 “ upon our selves to have studied *Facts* more, and the na-
 “ tural Consequences of them. But instead of that, many
 “ of his Followers (notwithstanding his good Example) have
 “ dealt wholly in *Theory*, and amused the Publick with
 “ little else but *idle Inventions*, and *learned Conundrums* :
 “ A strange Way of improving an Art that depends en-
 “ tirely upon *Experiment* and *Observation*. And in his
 Plan for the Improvement of Physick, he thus proceeds,
 p. 166. “ *Physicians* ought to reject every Thing that is
 “ doubtful and perplexed, and to cultivate the Business of
 “ *Observation*, in the best Manner it is capable of ; and that
 “ by this Means we shall come (if ever we can come) to
 “ the *true* Knowledge of Diseases, and the *readiest* Method
 “ of curing them.” And therefore in order to collect a
 Number of *Facts* sufficient to ground a good *System* upon,
 he advises, p. 171. “ That three or four Persons of proper
 “ Qualifications, should be employed in the Infirmaryes
 “ (where to be sure the greatest Variety are to be met with)
 “ to set down the Cases of the Patients there from Day to
 “ Day, *candidly* and *judiciously*, without any Regard to
 “ private Opinions, or publick *Systems*, and at the Year’s
 “ End to publish these *Facts*, just as they are, leaving every
 “ One to make the best Use of them he can for himself.
 “ Would not some such Method as this let us more into
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cines; but by proper Diet, regular Attendance, and due Regimen, will be restored to that Ease and Tranquility of Mind, which in many Cases is so necessary to the Cure of their Distempers. So that by Means of this noble Charity, the Lives of Multitudes of useful People, which must otherwise inevitably perish, unpitied, and unrelieved, or by lingering on in Misery, prove a Burthen to themselves, their Families, and the Publick, will be rescued from the Jaws of Destruction, and delivered from those dreadful Evils, which compleat the utmost Height of humane Misery, Pain and Sicknefs, united with Poverty.

But the good Influence of the Infirmary extends to the Souls, as well as the Bodies of the *sick Poor* : For here the Hungry are not only fed, and *Medicine given to heal their Sicknefs*; but all proper and reasonable Care is taken, by an exact Regularity of Manners, to reclaim them from their Vices ;
and

“ the Nature of Diseases in a few Years, than all the Books
“ of *Theories*, or even the Books of *Observations* hitherto
“ published? Certainly it would : And yet if proper Encou-
“ ragement was given, 'tis not at all unlikely, but that
“ Persons enough would soon be found, *every Way* qualified
“ for such an Undertaking ; and if even good *Salaries* were
“ allowed them, and every Thing made as easy and agree-
“ able to them as they could desire ; the *Benefit* the Publick
“ would receive from them, would vastly more than balance
“ the *Expence*.” *Dr. Clifton's State of Physick, Antient and*
Modern, p. 172.

and in this most favourable Season, while they are *exercised in the School of Affliction*, by good Books, and proper Instructions, to inculcate the Principles of Virtue and Religion, to impress their Minds with a due Sense of their Duty, and consequently, by the Blessing of G O D, to render them happy in this World, and for ever.

Again, it is no small Recommendation of this Institution, that here the united Charities of great Numbers are happily managed in one common Fund, and by that Means, become much more extensively Beneficial and Useful, than if disposed of singly, in a private Manner, to the Relief of particular Objects.

And it is moreover a Consideration of great Weight, in Favour of the Charity for which I am pleading, that the Direction and Management of it are in the Hands of those Noble, Honourable, and Worthy Persons, who so generously contributed to its first Establishment; who still, and we have the greatest Reason to hope, will always continue to encourage and support it. Persons, who can have no Interests of their own to serve.---Persons, superior to all Temptations of private Profit or Advantage.---Persons, who are not only an Honour, but a Blessing to their Country; and distinguished as much by their Virtues, as their Titles; and whose
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only Motive, for engaging in this blessed Work, could be nothing else, but a most benevolent Intention of doing the greatest possible Good to their Country, and to their indigent Fellow-Creatures. The Experience we have already had of their prudent Conduct, gives us the best Assurance, that whatever is bestowed, be it little or much, will be faithfully applied, and rendered serviceable to Purposes the most extensively beneficial, so as to become a constant Source of Relief and Happiness for the Miserable and Afflicted. What greater Inducement then can a wise Man have, to contribute in the most liberal Manner to this Charity, when he is so well assured, that whatever he gives will be dispensed in the most frugal and useful Way, to the most real and deserving Objects; and that not one or two Particulars will reap the Benefit of his Donation, but great Numbers will be affected by it, and perhaps Hundreds that were ready to perish, have Reason to bless him for it? So that if it is reasonable for a wise Man to prefer one Instance of Charity before another, where it is impossible to give to all, undoubtedly then the Infirmary bids the fairest for that Preference, as being calculated, to answer at once, all the Ends of useful Charity, which it was possible for the Wit of Man to contrive.

And

And now, can Arguments be wanting to prevail with any *Man* that considers these Things, to contribute what he can to the Support of this glorious Undertaking, when both Reason, and Religion, both Justice, and Gratitude, both the Love of G O D, and of his Neighbour, nay, both his own Self-Love, and Humanity, conspire with united Force, to lay him under the strongest and most engaging Obligations? Or can a *Christian* stand in Need of Motives, to induce him to do the greatest Honour both to himself, and his Religion, to imitate the Example of his blessed Redeemer, whose chief Business, as well as great Delight it was, while upon Earth, to *go about doing Good, † and healing all manner of Sicknes, and Diseases among the People ||*, when he is so well assured, that this easy, nay delightful Tribute of his Love, will entitle him in this World, to the Praise and Favour of good Men, and the Blessings of Providence; and in the next, admit him to an *eternal Weight of Glory in everlasting Habitations*.

But lest all these powerful Arguments should prove ineffectual; Let us but suppose a Case, which I am sure frequently happens, and I doubt is too frequently overlooked and neglected by those who are placed in happier Circumstances, who live in Ease, Wealth,

and

† *Act. x. 38.* || *Matt. iv. 23.*

and Plenty. Suppose an honest industrious Labourer, or painful Artificer, who has all his Days *risen up early, and late took Rest, and eaten the Bread of Carefulness*; * who has spent all his Health and Strength, in promoting the Good of others, in procuring us the Accommodations of an easy and plentiful Life; an humble Instrument of much Good to Mankind, which it has been his own hard Fate scarce ever to taste. Suppose such a Man languishing under all the Agonies both of Body and Mind, which are the constant Attendants of Pain and Sickness; not brought upon himself, by his own Folly or Vices, but subdued, and worn out by hard Labour; or interrupted in the painful Pursuit of his daily Bread by some unfortunate Accident, or sore Disease; unable either to procure the Medicines, or Attendance, that might in any wise mitigate his Pain, or alleviate his Distress: Nay, and all this Misery perhaps further aggravated by the Sight of a starving Family, whose only Support depended upon his Industry, and now ready to perish themselves for Want of the common Necessaries of Food and Raiment. What Man of any Compassion could see such a poor honest helpless Creature, *who is Flesh of his Flesh, and Bone of his Bone*, suffering in this most miserable

* P/. cxxvii. 2.

miserable Condition, whose Heart must not relent; and his Bowels melt within him? And who that but considers the Frequency of this extreme Distress among the laborious and useful Poor, and how insufficient the Parochial Provision in most Places is for their Relief, but what must wish, that there were some competent publick Endowment established for that Purpose? And who that wishes so, can refuse to contribute, when such a favourable Opportunity offers?

As we have Opportunity, the Apostle exhorts us, *to do Good to all Men.* * And sure never can a more fair Occasion of expressing our Charity, never can a more glorious and useful Opportunity be found, of *making to our selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, than that which now presents it self. Those therefore that abound in Wealth and Plenty, cannot sure fail of taking the Advantage of this happy Opportunity, both of shewing the most extensive Kindness to their poor afflicted Brethren, and of laying up in Store for themselves an ample and *never-failing Treasure in the Heavens*. And those of narrower Fortunes, and more moderate Abilities, have the greatest Encouragement to throw their *Mite* also into
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* Gal. vi. 10.

this common Stock of Charity ; since they are assured it will be of the greatest Service, and that they also *shall be accepted, not according to what they have not, but according to what they have* ; † and that Christ himself has promised, that he will not only take Notice of, but abundantly recompense the most inconsiderable Instance of their Good-will. *Insomuch that whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little Ones, but a Cup of cold Water, in the Name of a Disciple, shall in no Wise lose his Reward.* ||

There is one Particular more, which I cannot but mention ; and I am sorry the Situation of our Affairs both at Home and Abroad, give me so just Occasion to mention it. We are at present engaged in a dangerous and expensive foreign War, against two of the most powerful States upon the Continent, while at the same Time, an unnatural Rebellion has broke out within this Kingdom, and which, there is too much Reason to fear, will be supported by an Invasion either from one or both of the Powers with whom we are at War. Now who that considers this, and observes with what a surprising Progress Wickedness of all Kinds has prevailed amongst us *like an overflowing Stream* ? Who that observes the prodigious Increase of Pride, and Luxury, of Perjury, and

† 2 Cor. viii. 12.

|| Mark ix. 41.

and Corruption, of Irreligion and Profane-
ness, and above all of our intestine Factions,
and Divisions, both in Church and State,
but what must dread the Consequence of
these Things? which threaten us with no
less than publick Confusion and national
Ruin; and unless G O D is much more
merciful to us, than our many and great
Sins have deserved, it is to be feared, will
terminate in the Destruction of both our
Religious and Civil Liberties. On this trying
Occasion, it is no doubt the Duty of every
one of us strenuously to employ those Powers
which G O D has put into our Hands, both
for our own Defence, and the Overthrow of
our Enemies; and indeed it is no small
Abatement to the melancholy Prospect, that
so many Persons of the first Rank have di-
stinguished themselves in such an extraordi-
nary Manner in Defence of their King and
Country. But yet it would be a vain Thing
to trust entirely *to the Arm of Flesh: For the
Race is not always to the swift, nor the Battle
to the strong: ** But it is *the Lord of Hosts
that ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men*; and
upon Him it is, that we must chiefly de-
pend for the good Success of our Affairs;
and therefore to our Military Preparations,
it will be extreamly necessary to add our
Prayers, and our Alms. If we do so, we
F 2 shall

* Eccles. ix. 11.

shall have good Reason to hope for a Blessing upon our Endeavours: And tho' the Wickedness of the Land be great, yet it will be a comfortable Reflection, that *Uncharitableness to the Poor* is not among the Number of our *National Crimes*, and that there are still more than a few righteous Persons left, *to stand in the Gap, to turn away the wrathful Indignation of the Lord, lest he should destroy us.* †. And indeed if any Thing can prevail with GOD Almighty to be merciful to us, and to grant but a *Lengthening to our Tranquility*: If any Thing can *cover the Multitude* of the crying Sins of this Age and Nation, it must be that *Spirit of Charity*, which has of late so gloriously displayed it self in all Parts of the Kingdom, and of which I believe there never were at any Time greater Instances, || or more real and useful Effects; and especially since the Establishment of those last and best Institutions, the PUBLICK Infirmaries. § And it is with Pleasure that every good

† *Pf* cvi. 23.

|| Since the Year 1700, have been erected the Societies for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and for promoting *Christian Knowledge* at Home. Many hundreds of Charity Schools, the *Irish Charter Schools*; and within these last seven Years, have been most remarkable great Collections for the Sufferers by Fire at *Wellingborough*, *Stony Stratford*, and *Crediton*, and for the Poor in general during the hard Frost in 1739.

§ In the Year 1719, the *Westminster Infirmary* was established, and in 1732, *St. George's Hospital*; since which Time

good Man must behold, Persons of all Parties and Perswasions uniting *in this Labour of Love*: The pious Meetings occasioned for the Support of these publick Charities cannot sure but greatly contribute to heal our pernicious Divisions, to reconcile the Minds of Men, and to allay those fierce Heats and Animosities, which give the greatest Encouragement to our Enemies, and which have brought us to the very Brink of Destruction: For many Times nothing more is wanting to take away Prejudice, to extinguish Hatred and Ill-will, and to procure that most amiable of all earthly Blessings, *to see Brethren, dwell together in Unity*, † but only an Opportunity for Men to see, and converse with, and understand one another. And certainly there is great Reason to hope for this good Effect, when they
meet

Time nine more Hospitals and Infirmaries have been erected in several Parts of the Kingdom, viz. the *London Infirmary* and *Foundling Hospital*, the *Winchester Hospital*, the *Devonshire Infirmary* at *Exeter*, and one for the City of *Exeter*, and at *Bristol*, *Bath*, *York* and *Northampton* each one. A COUNTY Infirmary will be opened for the Reception of Patients on the first of *January* next in the City of *Worcester* (the very Center of that County.)—There is a spacious Pile now erecting for a PUBLICK Infirmary at *Shrewsbury*.—And I hear there is a Proposal for an Establishment of *this* sort at *Lincoln*; as likewise at *Reading* in *Berkshire*, for the Benefit of the Poor Sick within *fifteen* Miles round the Town of *Reading*. Besides, I am informed there are two at *Dublin*, and one at *Edinburgh*.

† Ps. cxxxiii. 1.

meet in the House of GOD as Friends, and when they join so heartily in the same common good Designs, as Fellow-Christians, as Lovers of GOD, and Lovers of Mankind.

Let us all therefore be perswaded to unite in this glorious and blessed Work, and let us strive to abound in it more and more: And if no other Argument can prevail with us, yet at least let us pity the bleeding Wounds of our dear Country, and by our Charity engage Heaven in the Defence of our Religion, our Lives, and Liberties, and whatever else is valuable to us: And for this Purpose, *Let us break off our Sins by Repentance, and our Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor:* * Affuredly concluding, that Nothing will so effectually recommend us to the Favour and Protection of Providence as our good and charitable Actions. *Lay up thy Treasure* (says the Son of Syrach) *according to the Commandment of the most High;---and it shall fight for thee against thine Enemies, better than a mighty Shield, or a strong Spear.* †

But to conclude, whatever may become of us here, and whatever Changes or Chances may befall us in this miserable Life; yet we are assured by the GOD of Truth himself, that we shall certainly fare the better for our good Deeds in a future State, and that

* Dan. iv. 27. † Ecclus. xxix. 11, 13.

that for what we lend to him now, we shall receive a most ample *Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just.* * Then those Monuments of Charity which we have been so careful to erect in Obedience to our blessed Redeemer shall entitle us to a State of Happiness every Way compleat,---*large* as our utmost Wishes, and *lasting* as our Souls.

* *Luke xiv. 14.*

F I N I S.

By the same A U T H O R.

AN Affize S E R M O N (shewing Virtue and Vice to be the great Causes of the publick Happiness and Misery of Nations) preach'd at *Northampton, August 1, 1739.* Recommended from the Bench with *uncommon* Applause by Lord Chief Justice *Willes*, and printed at the Request of the High Sheriff and the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury.

